

### **Short teaser text (237/250 characters)**

A duet composed of meaningful hand gestures ripped from the internet, *Meaningless Dance 13 (Empty Gestures)* exposes the labour of memorisation and delivery; questioning what a sincere gesture from the performers to the audience might be.

### **Description (453/500 words)**

*Meaningless Dance 13 (Empty Gestures)* is a duet composed of meaningful hand gestures ripped from the internet. Two dancers move through a series of signs and gestures borrowed from multiple 'everyday' sources (such as sign language, codified religious movements, or casual unconscious motion in conversation). Performed to the precise beat of a metronome, the simplicity and synchronicity of the movements amplifies the hesitations and minor differences between the dancers; the deceptively simple premise produces a quietly poetic and complexly intimate encounter. Whilst recognizable and rehearsed the gestures are ambiguous and decontextualized - the only certainty being the intense and material commitment of the performers to learn and reproduce them.

An accumulating series of data held within two bodies, the chain of learned material grows with each performance. Within an contemporary situation in which knowledge and information is circulated more widely and rapidly than ever before, the piece questions how memory is located, the porous borders of intangible cultural heritage, and how ideas spread across bodies. Hovering within the meaning/lessness of these cited gestures, the work exposes the very real labour of delivery; questioning what a sincere gesture might be from performer to audience. We aim to interrogate the relationship between performer and spectator - what can each offer the other; and what kind of commitment, to communication, interpretation or understanding, is demanded or expected from either side? How might sincerity and meaninglessness meet, and what might this mean to an audience?

Within a climate of austerity and neoliberalism, the experimental performance scene announces its political utility as a site of assembly, exchange, expression and critique. However, in opposition to a society that calls for productivity, stringency and accountability, we resolutely defend art's potential to remain wasteful and non-instrumentalized – a waste of energy, time, space and possibility. Insisting on the most oblique of gestures, we assert the continued significance of strategies of insignificance and meaninglessness. *Empty Gestures* forms one of our strategies of this waste, a waste of effort that refuses to produce a clear meaning or message. The

potential for communication is questioned in the flattened cataloguing and reproduction of these gestures, which nonetheless produces a stark and powerful moment of performance.

Our past work has continually explored performers in states of inattention, hesitation and distraction. Drawing from our interdisciplinary background, we have developed a minimalist sensibility in which a stripped-back aesthetic brings focus to performers working with a fidgeting and fluctuating concentration; this minor poetry consistently invites our audiences into a quiet and intimate mode of spectating. *Empty Gestures* has been described as 'a bold work, apparently simple, yet complex in its thinking and deceptively demanding in its execution' (Efrosini Protopapa (practicing artist and Senior Lecturer in Dance at University of Roehampton)).